

**Tìm hiểu về nhận thức của sinh viên và giáo viên
về hiệu quả của việc dạy và học kỹ năng Nói tiếng Anh
theo hướng dạy riêng biệt và hướng dạy tích hợp cho
sinh viên chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh
tại Trường Đại học Quy Nhơn**

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TÓM TẮT

Bài báo trình bày, phân tích, so sánh và đánh giá về nhận thức của sinh viên và giáo viên đối với hiệu quả của dạy và học kỹ năng Nói tiếng Anh cho sinh viên chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh tại Trường Đại học Quy Nhơn theo hướng dạy riêng biệt và hướng tích hợp. Nghiên cứu chỉ tập trung vào kỹ năng Nói do phạm vi nghiên cứu và hạn chế về thời gian. Phương pháp định lượng và miêu tả được sử dụng cùng với sự hỗ trợ của phương pháp phân tích và tổng hợp để phân tích dữ liệu. Nghiên cứu tập trung phân tích câu hỏi khảo sát cho 200 sinh viên năm thứ hai ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh (khóa 41) sau khi đã trải nghiệm học môn Nói tiếng Anh theo hai hướng trên và câu hỏi khảo sát dành riêng cho bốn giảng viên đảm nhận môn Nói và đều đã dạy theo hai hướng riêng biệt các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ và tích hợp các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ cho những sinh viên này. Điều quan trọng nhất là nghiên cứu đã góp phần khẳng định rằng hướng dạy tách biệt các kỹ năng, cụ thể kỹ năng Nói hiệu quả hơn nhiều so với hướng dạy tích hợp.

Từ khóa: *Nhận thức, hiệu quả, hướng tách biệt, hướng tích hợp, kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh.*

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Teachers' and students' perception on the efficiency of integrated skills approach compared to that of segregated skills one in teaching and learning speaking English to general English majors at Quy Nhon University

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ABSTRACT

Given is the paper concerning the teachers' and students' perception on the efficiency of the segregated-skills approach compared with that of the integrated-skills approach in teaching and learning speaking English to the general English majors at Quy Nhon University. The analysis focuses only on the speaking skill due to the scope and limited time of the study. Both quantitative and descriptive methods were used with the assistance of analytic and synthetic ones to help work out the most feasible findings. The questionnaires were delivered to 200 General English-majored sophomores who were chosen randomly in 4 classes (Course 41) after they had experienced learning speaking English in both approaches namely the integrated-skills approach and the segregated-skills one. Four teachers who are in charge of teaching speaking English in these two approaches were also asked to give responses to the questions in the questionnaires exclusively for teachers. These questionnaires were collected and analysed, and most importantly, this research has found out that the segregated-skills approach has revealed to be far more effective than the integrated-skills approach from the teachers' and students' perspectives.

Keywords: *Perception, efficiency, segregated-skills approach, integrated-skills approach, English speaking skill.*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that finding out the syllabus as well as the methodology that suit the students most is the key factor in the process of teaching English as a foreign language, particularly speaking skill. Therefore, at Quy Nhon University, there is a revolution in methods, approaches together with course books which are applied to General English majors. It is suggested that for students of Courses 38 - 41, the integrated skills approach which means listening, speaking, reading and writing

are taught to students at the same time is compulsory in the first three semesters, and the segregated skills approach when these four skills are learnt distinctly at different sessions is imperative in the next terms. Nonetheless, in reality, the students' ability to speak everyday English is not satisfactorily improved after the initial three semesters while the target for learning speaking English from Subject 1.1 to Subject 2.4 is that students must communicate well in terms of everyday English. More noticeably, these students, meanwhile, became good at presenting

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a topic or describing, comparing and contrasting the two pictures at an advanced level which is considered as the aim of the Subject 3.3 after they finish learning speaking skill in the fourth term with the segregated skills approach. Moreover, there are some studies concerning teaching speaking English from various perspectives; however, most of them are general and almost not appropriate and effectively applicable at Quy Nhon University. Due to these sources, this research was conducted to contribute to resolving the problem.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Segregated skills approach applicable at Quy Nhon University

According to Oxford,¹ the traditional segregated approach is defined as focusing solely on “language-based approach” where the language itself is the focus of instruction. In addition, Mohan² and Jing³ state that in the segregated-skill approach, the mastery of discrete language skills such as reading and speaking is seen as the key to successful learning, and language learning is typically separate from content learning (Mohan)². It is common that segregated-skill ESL/EFL classes present instruction in terms of skill-linked learning strategies: reading strategies, listening strategies, speaking strategies, and writing strategies (see Peregoy & Boyle⁴). In fact, this approach is applied in a variety of language institutes since perhaps teachers and administrators think it is logically easier to present courses on writing divorced from speaking, or on listening isolated from reading. They may believe that it is instructionally impossible to concentrate on more than one skill at a time.

Furthermore, it is essential to understand that it is confusing or misleading to believe that a given strategy is associated with only one specific language skill. Oxford⁵ suggests that many strategies, such as paying selective attention, self-evaluating, asking questions, analyzing, synthesizing, planning, and predicting, are

applicable across skill areas. Common strategies help weave the skills together. Teaching students to improve their learning strategies in one skill area can often enhance performance in all language skills (Oxford).⁶

This is true in reality when in many instances where an ESL or EFL course is labeled by a single skill, the segregation of language skills might be only partial. A course bearing a discrete-skill title might actually involve multiple, integrated skills. For example, in a course on intermediate speaking, the teacher gives all of the directions orally in English, thus causing students to use their listening ability to understand the lesson; and they are also required to read texts related to the lesson/topic to produce English speeches. The major focus in this case, however, is still the speaking skill when the students must achieve certain objectives concerning speaking English. This is what the discrete skill approach applied at Quy Nhon University means. The four language skills are taught separately in different sessions, and materials as well as activities are usually designed concentrating on principally one specific skill, and some other skills are not really emphasized simultaneously. The method used to teach each skill to the English - majored students at Quy Nhon University is often a combination of various advantages of a number of methods. In other words, not only is language supplied but a variety of ideas or authentic materials are also transferred to the students.

2.2. Integrated skills approach applicable at Quy Nhon University

The underlying belief that under the segregated-skills approach, the students managed to know the language skills but were not able to communicate their thoughts by means of language is affirmed by Dubin and Olshtain⁷ and Tajzad and Namaghi's.⁸ These researchers state that by this approach, students have knowledge of language components such as grammar, vocabulary and the like but could rarely use them to communicate

in English. With an integrating approach for the development of communicative skills in the classroom, however, the four skills in the acquisition of knowledge of a foreign language can be taught in a coherent way and practiced together, which are believed to bring a variety of benefits far outweighing those of the segregated-skills approach. Firstly, the integrated-skill approach exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. Learners then rapidly gain a true picture of the richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication. Moreover, this approach stresses that English is not just an object of academic interest nor merely a key to passing an examination; instead, English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among people. This approach allows teachers to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time. Integrating the language skills also promotes the learning of real content, not just the dissection of language forms. Finally, the integrated-skill approach, whether found in content-based or task-based language instruction or some hybrid form, can be highly motivating to students of all ages and backgrounds.

Particularly, with the determination to find out the best approach together with techniques and curriculum to teach the English majors at Quy Nhon University the most effectively, the leaders as well as the teaching staff of the Foreign Languages Department made a decision to apply the integrated skills approach which are considered to be better than the segregated-skills one to teach four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing at the same time during the first three semesters, and speaking skill was evaluated as a mid-term score (accounting for 20% the subject overall score). They hoped that this approach would bring much more benefits than the segregated-skill approach.

2.3. Description of the used materials

For the initial three semesters, the general English-major students at Quy Nhon University are

required to study the four skills by the integrated skills approach, and the official course books for this curriculum are *Solutions* by Tim Falla, Paul A Davies⁹⁻¹¹ at Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate levels. Speaking skill is accessed as the mid-term result which accounts for 20% of the total subject score. Our students learn in the credit-based curriculum; therefore, their class attendance occupies 10% of the final score, mid-term test - 20%, and final exam - 70%. During this time period, the students have to complete the subjects called 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4. Each subject consists of four language skills taught simultaneously and lasts 45 periods, each of which is 50 minutes long. Speaking skill in these subjects is related mainly to everyday English and picture descriptions. After finishing these 360 periods of language skills, the students continue to learn 3.1 (separated listening skill), 3.2 (separated reading skill), 3.3 (separated speaking skill), and 3.4 (separated writing skill), each of which lasts 45 periods. At this stage, the main course book is *Solutions* by Tim Falla, Paul A Davies¹² at the advanced level, and the contents of speaking skill entail formal presentations of challenging topics and comparing and contrasting two pictures.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to discover the teachers' and students' perception on how effective the integrated-skills approach and the segregated-skills approach seem to be and which one is better; consequently, the quantitative and descriptive methods were applied. The administration of the questionnaires was fulfilled for 200 General English-major sophomores chosen randomly in 4 classes (Course 41) when they had finished the Subject 3.3 (the first separated speaking), which means that all of these students had studied speaking English according to integrated skills approach and segregated skills approach. Additionally, four speaking teachers who are in charge of teaching speaking English in both approaches were asked to give responses to the questions in the questionnaire for teachers. The

questionnaire covered the items that contribute to evaluating the efficiency of both approaches in terms of teaching speaking skill. The data were then calculated and analyzed with the terms related to the study.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Students' evaluations

Overall, the responses to the questionnaire indicate that the majority of the students have exponentially improved their speaking skill after they learnt the speaking skill separately.

To be more specific, with regard to their self-evaluation of their ability to use English to communicate in daily life, which is the aim that they were required to achieve after finishing the subjects from 1.1 to 2.4 in the integrated-skills approach, it is disappointing to find that only two students (1%) rated it "good", 48 respondents (24%) - "rather good", 55% - "average" and up to 20% - "weak". One fifth of these students felt that they nearly cannot speak everyday English.

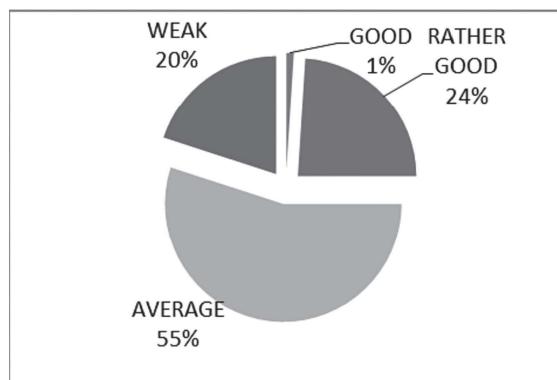


Figure 1. Students' self-evaluation of their ability to produce everyday English

However, with respect to the question regarding their self-evaluation of their ability to use English to present a topic or describe and compare two pictures at an advanced level according to the 3.3 curriculum in which the segregated-skills approach was applied, once again no respondent chose "excellent", two students (1%) - "good". It is more interesting when 42% responded "rather good", and 55% - "average",

and especially a mere 2% rated "weak". This illustrates that the number of weak students declined significantly, while that for rather good students climbed considerably.

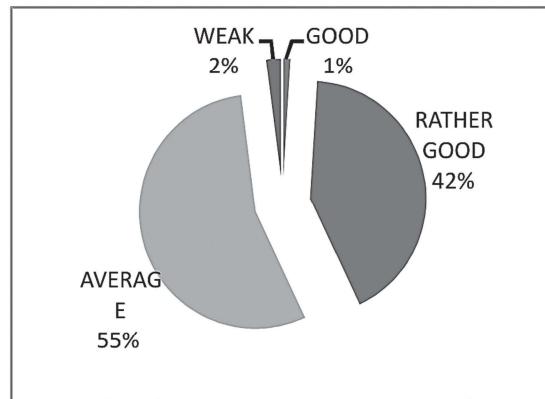


Figure 2. Students' self-evaluation of their ability to speak English according to 3.3

This fact can help to explain the reason why the number of students supporting the segregated skills approach is so high. 98% of them preferred separated speaking owing to the fact that they might have more opportunities to focus on each skill namely listening, speaking, reading and writing thoroughly and effectively. Only 2% enjoyed integrated skills since they thought that if they were bad at one certain skill, they could ignore it. Nevertheless, this is an alarming issue because they cannot improve their weak points as they neglect them. What is more, all the students said that in an integrated skills class, there were so many things and skills that were focused, and then speaking skill was not really emphasized; consequently, their speeches were not corrected for improvement, and rarely did they speak in class.

In terms of their difficulties in learning speaking English when studying from Subject 1.1 to Subject 2.4, the majority of them, accounting for 74%, considered "grammar" as one challenging factor, followed by "vocabulary", "pronunciation", and "lack of ideas" at 72%, 53% and 52% respectively. "Little home practice" was selected by 36%, "little in-class practice" - 33% and "lack of confidence" - 19%.

Table 1. Difficulties in learning speaking English when studying from Subject 1.1 to Subject 2.4.

NAME OF THE DIFFICULTIES	PERCENTAGE (%)
grammar	74%
vocabulary	72%
pronunciation	53%
lack of ideas	52%
little home practice	36%
little in-class practice	33%
lack of confidence	19%

More importantly, among these challenges, a variety of students stated that “English grammar” is the most difficult that they cannot overcome, accounting for 52%. It is our belief that the way students learn “English grammar” from the very beginning and during the time at school and even at university when they most focus on doing multiple choice exercises and rarely speak English in a good manner really results in this situation.

As for the question about their difficulties in learning speaking English Subject 3.3., “grammar” is still the biggest obstacle, but at a little lower 72%. “Lack of ideas” has become the second ranked challenge at 70%, followed by “vocabulary” and “pronunciation” at 60% and 53% respectively. This might be due to the fact that the topics for speaking in this subject are all in the book “*Advanced Solutions*” by Tim Falla, Paul A Davies¹², which is very complicated and unfamiliar to them, and particularly their pronunciation cannot be improved in such a short time while they have to produce advanced and quite complex vocabulary.

Table 2. Difficulties in learning speaking English when studying Subject 3.3.

NAME OF THE DIFFICULTIES	PERCENTAGE (%)
grammar	72%
lack of ideas	70%
vocabulary	60%
pronunciation	53%
little in-class practice	20%
little home practice	16%
lack of confidence	12%

In other words, the students’ grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and ideas were affected by the course material rather than the segregated-skills approach or the integrated-skills one. On the contrary, their home practice, in-class practice and confidence had been exponentially better when studying Subject 3.3 by the segregated-skills approach.

In fact, the majority of them revealed that during the time they learnt Subject 1.1 to Subject 2.4, speaking skill was not really equally focused compared the other skills as in the class they had to do reading exercises, listening ones, vocabulary, etc., which occupied most of the time. As a consequence, they admitted that they just said what they thought or just answered the questions given by the teacher and even lost the motivation to speak English. Particularly, one source behind this would be that speaking was not evaluated in the final exam in the Subject 1.1 to Subject 2.4 curriculum (the integrated-skills approach). They meanwhile stated that with Subject 3.3 taught in the segregated-skills approach, everything about the curriculum was easy to follow and the exercises were clearly arranged, which helped them to learn to speak English considerably better in terms of preparation, practice, confidence, etc.

To be more specific, approximately 33% of the students learning the subjects 1.1 to 2.4 rated “little in-class practice”, whereas this figure fell to somewhere in the vicinity of 20% in Subject 3.3, and it was more impressive when “little home practice” decreased from 36% to 16%, nearly half the original number. Similar trend is “lack of confidence” at 12% in segregated skills approach compared to 19% when learning speaking English by the integrated -skills approach. In this sense, the segregated-skills approach proves to be more beneficial compared to the integrated-skills one.

Another thing that illustrates the outweighing efficiency of the segregated-skills approach is the increased average weekly time spent on speaking English in class and outside the class by each student. When they studied from Subject 1.1 to Subject 2.4, it is astonishing

to note that 15% of them did not open their mouth to speak English in their class, while 40% said that they often spoke English for about 15 minutes a week, and 45% - 30 minutes a week. They added that the number of periods per week seemed to be overloaded to them when they had to study English most of the days without improving much. Meanwhile, when learning speaking 3.3, none of them said that they did not speak English in class; 6% spent 10 minutes speaking English in class; 10% - 15 minutes; 24% - 20 minutes; and 55% - 35 minutes. Furthermore, what made us most enjoyable is that the average number of weekly hours the students spent preparing the speech for a suggested topic in particular and speaking English in general at home has considerably risen from 1 hour to more than 3 hours. It seems that they had no choice but have to do it because the teacher might call them at any time or they could volunteer to present their answers.

Regarding the factors that contribute importantly to the improvement of learning speaking English, it is estimated by the researchers that the positive aspects of the segregated skill result from the more care and more thorough corrections of the enthusiastic teachers. This anticipation is illustrated by the fact that 90% of the students agreed that "the teacher's careful corrections" as one source of enhancing their learning speaking English. This may help them have some orientation in finding an effective answer, and they can recognize what they should do right, and it is evident that it is the teacher's effective corrections that transfer them high motivations to study speaking English. This could take place only in a segregated speaking class since in an integrated one, there were a variety of things ranging from speaking, listening, writing and reading that the teachers needed to cover; therefore, the teachers did not have adequate time and experience to teach the students the most carefully. From these positive attitudes, the students were more likely to practice speaking English by their own, and 95% opted for "self-study with frequent practice" as the most vital contributing factor.

Table 3. Important contributing factors to speaking English improvement

NAME OF THE FACTORS	PERCENTAGE (%)
self study with frequent practice	95%
teacher's careful corrections	90%
pronunciation practice	68%
learning grammar	48%
communicative environment	40%
teacher's encouragement	40%
learning from friends	38%

When evaluating students' ability to speak English prior to learning Subject 3.3, 3 teachers (75%) stated that the students' levels were not similar and most of them were "weak"; only 1 teacher (25%) rated them as "average". In reality, all of the teachers agreed that at the beginning of the 3.3 classroom periods, the majority of the students were too passive and even felt too nervous to open their mouth to speak English. Nonetheless, when learning speaking English (3.3) in class, they had more time and chances to practice speaking English not only in the class environment but also outside or at home. As a consequence, their abilities to speak English in terms of the lessons in Subject 3.3. have significantly improved according to three teachers, whereas 1 teacher said that it really depends on each student.

Furthermore, due to the curriculum, in Subject 3.3., students have to learn how to describe, compare and contrast two pictures and present a certain topic in their opinions in a formal way. In addition, the topics for discussion are marginally challenging to them. Consequently, most of the students could speak what they had prepared, but when asked something else related to speaking parts in Subject 1.1 to Subject 2.4, they had difficulty reacting well. 100% of the teachers agreed that in a limited time, the teacher cannot help the students to practice reacting everything in English effectively.

More importantly, all of the teachers believe that pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary,

lack of confidence, lack of ideas, little home practice and little in-class practice are all the barriers that prevent students from producing good spoken English. Two teachers (50%) emphasized that if the students did not prepare the lesson at home, they could not learn effectively in class. That is the reason why the curriculum as well as the teachers should be really effective in boosting the students' motivation. In other words, the efficiency of the segregated speaking skill approach over that of the integrated skills one can be revealed by the fact that all the students wish to learn the English speaking skill separately, which would bring them a variety of benefits to help them improve their speaking skill and that all the teachers in question also support the segregated speaking skill approach.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study has found out the real effectiveness of the two approaches namely segregated skills one and integrated skills one which are applied to teach English to English majors at Quy Nhon University. It is apparent that the advantages of the segregated skills approach far outweigh those of the integrated skills one. To be more specific, with the segregated skills approach, the students had more motivations and opportunities to practice speaking English not only in class but also at home. In addition, they could be corrected thoroughly with essential comments that oriented them in a right way to learn English, particularly speaking English. This would definitely increase significantly the motivation among students to learn oral English in the best way. Most importantly, this approach could reduce the pressure of the overloaded curriculum on the students' shoulders. This research also helps the Foreign Languages Department at Quy Nhon University in discovering the best curriculums and approaches, applying the segregated-skills approach, to bring the best benefits to the English majors in particular as well as the university in general.

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